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CIA WEATHERS SNIPING

By WILLIAM S. WHITE

WASHINGTON—The changing of the top guard at the Central Intelligence Agency is proceeding smoothly notwithstanding CIA's inbuilt capacity to evoke more than its share of a kind of querulous suspicion and criticism.

WHITE

Richard Helms, who is to be the agency's director in succession to his resigned chief, Adm. William F. Raborn, has been given the unanimous approval of the leaderships of both parties in the Senate.

Deputy Helms thus becomes Director Helms under a powerful and practically speaking, an unchallengeable Senate sponsorship.

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MOREOVER, IT has become clear that the demand of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for a part in Congressional supervision of the CIA is going exactly nowhere.

The most realistic estimate is that if and when this proposal is pushed to a slowdown on the Senate floor, it will do well to attract as much as 20 per cent of the vote.

CIA is already supervised by a select and bipartisan Senate group, headed by Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia, which demonstrably holds the confidence of a vast majority of the Senate as a whole. So the Russell committee will continue to be the sole supervising group; and that is that.

All this state of affairs is understandably most pleasing to the CIA, which has long been the top villian in all the bureaucracy to a small minority in Congress.

These men simply cannot accept the hard reality that a tight secrecy over clandestine operations is the unavoidable price exacted by the kind of world in which we live.

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THE WHOLE point is that the Russell CIA committee has never known a leak of national security information; the Foreign Relations Committee is widely known for just such leads.

CIA is not being rejected by a Senate majority only because of the bankruptcy of its argument that CIA meddles in the making of foreign policy, but mainly because some of its members simply cannot keep from talking too much about some things that should not be talked about at all.

The net of it is that the agency as an institution is in the process of a massive vindication by the Senate. This is bracing news, indeed, to the poor old CIA, which can never speak of its many successes and can never even try to defend its few failures.

It is happy news, too, for Admiral Raborn, whose service tot this country — from his development of the Polaris missile program to his conduct of the CIA — has been rarely matched.

To be sure, Raborn leaves his post — for a resumed retirement long since promised him by President Johnson — under criticism here and there. Still, he can take comfort in the knowledge that the one man who really ought to know the quality of his work, the President, is genuinely sorry to see him go.

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THE PRESIDENT has sent to Raborn a private letter of farewell that should convince the open-minded that the Admiral did a good job, indeed. "As your leaving," the President told Raborn, "you take with you not only my gratitude but that of your fellow countrymen who have been served so well by your unique powers of leadership and understanding."

If this isn't a **"well done"** from the commander-in-chief to a faithful old sailor, nobody could write one.

That the President has sent it reflects, to be sure, more than personal appreciation for a man who has done a particularly hard tour of duty. It also reflects his grave concern that all men in the most critical and most criticized arms of government—Intelligence, Defense, State Department — are of necessity asked to bear burdens of such over-riding pressure as to make high careers less and less attractive and sometimes hardly even bearable.

Highly qualified men are hard to find — and keep — even in times far less demanding [illegible] running sore of the war in Vietnam.